THE COMTE DE PARIS.

HISTORY OF THE CIVIL WAR.

HISTORY OF THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA. By the COMTE DE PARIS. Published by Special Arrangement with Author. Volume IV. 8vo, pp. xviii, 631. Philadelphia: Porter & Coates.

The fourth volume of the American edition of the Comte de Paris's "History of the Civil War" contains the seventh and part of the eighth volumes of the French edition. The American editor states in a prefatory note that this last instalment of the work embraces all that "was contained in the manuscript which the distinguished author carried with him when he was banished from France. Previous to the promulgation of the decree of banishment a speedy completion of the work was hoped for, but political responsibilities and an enforced absence from the collection of books and manuscripts at Chateau d' Eu relating to the Civil War of 1861-'65 have not justified this hope."

The present volume opens with the advance to Tullahoma in the Eastern Tennessee campaign of 1863; proceeds with the account of the engagements at Cumberland Gap, Davis's Cross-Roads, the battle of Chickamauga. The second book treats of the siege of Chattanooga, the situation of the Army of the Ohio at Knoxville, with Longstreet's futile campaign, and closes with the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. In the third book the Fort Sanders episode is described, with the final retreat of Longstreet and Forrest's expedition. The history then turns to Charleston and follows the progress of the blockade and bombardment to the evacuation of Fort Wagner and the failure of the first naval attempts to capture Fort Sumter. The third chapter of this book is concerned with the operations in the far West, and the fourth book deals with the Red River expedition, Fort Pillow, Mansfield, and Alexandria, in the early part of 1864, the volume ending with the Florida expedition and the defeat of Seymour at Olustee.

The account of the East Tennessee campaign develops a strong scepticism as to the capacity of Rosecrans and Bragg both. The Comte de Paris is a military historian who steadfastly strives to hold the scales of justice even. It is very seldom that his conclusions indicate the least prejudice, and in regard of dispassionateness he is a model critic. But he does not at all hold with such critics as General Cist, who have seen no fault with Rosecrans's dispositions even at Davis's Cross-Roads and Chickamauga, and who have almost seemed to regard his subsequent investment at Chattanooga as part of a masterly strategy. In one detail the Comte de Paris, however, appears to have been less careful than is his wont. In describing the movement of General Wood on the second day of Chickamauga, which left the fatal gap in the line of the Union right, the Comte says that Rosecrans "dispatched to Wood an order, expressed in brief and peremptory terms, to close promptly upon Reynolds." Now, there is an important omission in this statement. The order, which was written, was as follows: "The General commanding directs that you close up on Reynolds as fast as possible, *and support him.*" The italicised words show that whatever the order may have been as Rosecrans delivered it, it had been twisted by the aide-de-camp who wrote it down; for as handed to Wood it certainly seemed to require his withdrawal from the line of battle, but at the same time it exhibited a confusion of terms or thought or both, which should have warned Wood of the danger of trying to interpret it literally. He knew that it was based on error, since there was no gap between his corps and that of Reynolds, and, moreover, as the latter had hardly yet been seriously engaged, he could not require support. But it was his interpretation of the order to support Reynolds which led Wood to leave the line, and created opportunity for the disaster which followed, and this fact is not shown by the Comte de Paris, according to whose statement the movement of Wood seems unintelligible. When a corps commander receives an order which is plainly self-contradictory he is thrown upon his own judgment and responsibility. That was where Wood erred. But Rosecrans shares the accountability with him, and in other details of the battle has more than enough responsibilities which he can share with none.

The Comte de Paris strongly condemns his conduct in leaving the field and abandoning Thomas in his heroic defence of the left. General Cist has done his best to soften this episode by alleging that McCook and Garfield admired and approved the commander's headlong flight to Chattanooga, but even he is obliged to admit that his chief lost his head amid the confusion of the rout pouring through McFarland's Gap. That admission, however, is fatal. A commander-in-chief who loses his head while a great battle is as yet undecided cannot be trusted with mighty enterprises. There is no case on record in which Grant lost his head, even for ten minutes, and there were times when the prospect must have seemed quite as dark to him as it was on the afternoon of the 20th September at Chickamauga. But the French historian, while severely censuring Rosecrans for his course both before, during, and after Chickamauga, is none the less of opinion that the final responsibility for the disaster rests with Halleck, who, by suspending the operations of the other armies, enabled the Confederates to reinforce Bragg and to concentrate a force superior in all arms to that under Rosecrans. Fortunately for the Union cause, Bragg himself was not an eminent commander, nor was he well served by all his lieutenants. Polk's slothfulness on the second day of Chickamauga was of great advantage to the Federals, while Bragg's own blunder would quite possibly have enabled Thomas to win victory on the verge of defeat but for the presence and dash of Longstreet.

The events succeeding Chickamauga; the shutting-up of the Army of the Cumberland in Chattanooga; Rosecrans's depression and hesitation; Halleck's tardy effort to reinforce him; Bragg's feeble investment and imperfect occupation of Lookout Mountain; Grant's energetic advent and the instant preparation of offensive measures; the prompt opening of communications via Brown's Ferry; the arrival of Sherman with the Fifteenth Corps; the storming of Lookout Mountain and the magnificent capture of Missionary Ridge; are described with the careful minuteness which characterizes the whole of this history. The Comte de Paris does not forget to emphasize the splendid rebuke given to Grant's doubts of its spirit by the Army of the Cumberland in its spontaneous conversion of what was meant for a demonstration merely into a victorious attack. At Missionary Ridge the Union soldiers literally took the operation into their hands, and no one was more surprised than Grant himself when he saw the line charging with irresistible impetuosity up the steep slopes of the Ridge. This time Bragg was carried away in the rout, as Rosecrans had been at Chickamauga, but had he been free to issue his orders he could not have changed the issue of the day or restored his shattered formations. The account of these battles, while perfectly void of literary or descriptive effort, is so vivified by the careful draft of the surroundings as to present a strong picture, all the more impressive for its simplicity and avoidance of sensationalities.

The story of Longstreet's futile attempt upon Fort Sanders, with the raising of the siege of Knoxville and the release of Burnside, follows. In detaching Longstreet against the Army of the Ohio, Bragg insured his own overthrow, though with Grant in command it may well be that Longstreet's presence before Chattanooga would have only rendered the struggle more obstinate, and not have altered its outcome. The Comte de Paris' next turns to Charleston, where Gillmore and Dahlgren were trying to solve a very hard problem. They were assisted, he holds, by the insufficiency of Beauregard's means of defence. He was short of men and could expect no reinforcements. Whether the easy occupation of Morris Island was mainly due to this fact, he does not seem certain. The general evidence, however, justifies the conclusion that the Confederate commander was deceived as to the purposes of his opponents until it was too late to offer effective resistance. The entrance of the monitors within the bar, the bombardment of Fort Wagner, and virtual demolition of Sumter, the difficult land approaches to Wagner, and its final evacuation, are in turn described. In regard to the naval operations the Comte considers Admiral Dahlgren's alleged reasons for refusing to attempt to enter the harbor insufficient, and not justified by the failure of the launch attack on Sumter, because that expedition was undertaken without the concert of the army, and besides, was so awkwardly conducted as to be hopeless from the outset. Nevertheless he expresses the opinion that the success of the siege was due to the navy, and especially to the monitors. The errors of the Confederates also helped. Had they not, before Beauregard's arrival, voluntarily abandoned their positions on Cole's Island, which excluded the Federals from Stone Inlet, and, later, had they not concentrated their defensive works on the northern part of Morris Island, thus allowing their opponents to occupy the southern part, the task of the Union army and navy would have been much more difficult even than it was.

The Comte de Paris is evidently not a believer in the capacity of General Banks, whose operations in the far West he follows with considerable dissatisfaction, and over whose Red River expedition he might almost be said to gloat, were such a word applicable to so sober and serious a narrative. The repulse at Sabine Pass opens this branch of the war-history, and immediately following is a record of that tangled series of small engagements, marches, counter-marches, expeditions against scattered posts, cavalry raids, and generally insignificant though picturesque proceedings which were carried on far from the centres of action where the fate of the Union was being decided. Steele, Blunt, Franklin, Sterling Price, Marmaduke, and others, are seen appearing and disappearing in the hurly burly, and on the whole the Confederate cause loses ground. That is until Banks obtains the desire of his heart, and the Red River expedition is at last undertaken. The coast of Texas was already in the hands of the Union. Banks had plans of his own, however, which involved, in the opinion of the Comte de Paris, very singular principles. To gain for the Federal Government the revenue derivable from the sale of the large quantities of hoarded cotton threatened by the Confederate Government with destruction, General Banks—prompted, the Comte thinks, by cotton speculators—proposed to the Confederate officers a scheme whereby this cotton might be saved, and its actual owners be deprived of all interest in it, while a certain part of its value was to go to the Confederate officers consenting to this remarkable arrangement. "Banks," says the Comte, "thought that the majority of the officers of the Southern army beyond the Mississippi, discouraged and eventually separated from the Confederacy, would be captivated by this combination, which rested on both theft and treason, and that they would be seen continuing to fight the armies of the Union while they would openly carry on a lucrative trade in joint account with its agents. Nothing proves that such a supposition was justified." To carry out such a scheme, however, it was first necessary to occupy the districts where the coveted staple was, and hence the motive of the Red River expedition. The Comte de Paris thinks that Banks really believed the Confederates would offer no serious resistance to the invaders; that they would yield possession of Alexandria, Mansfield, Shreveport even, rather than lose the opportunity of getting pay for the cotton.

The failure of the expedition he ascribes quite as much to the incompetence of Banks as to the unfavorable state of the river, which paralyzed Porter at the most critical juncture. It must be said, however, that whenever the Union commanders made a blunder the Confederate generals promptly capped it with another, and very often with a more disastrous one. The Comte evidently believes that if Kirby Smith had been half as sagacious and prescient as his lieutenant, Taylor, there would have been no opportunity for that magnificent exhibition of American inventive resource by which Lieutenant (afterward General) Bailey rescued Porter's imprisoned fleet at Alexandria. For he holds that if Smith, instead of calling Taylor back to Shreveport after the battle of Mansfield, and setting out on a wild hunt after Steele, had followed Banks down the river with all his forces, both the army and the fleet could have been destroyed. Indeed, had Bailey not come forward with his famous dam project when he did, the presumption appears to be that Banks would have been so controlled by his increasing apprehensions as to have abandoned the fleet to its fate; and in the then state of the river the ships would have been practically helpless.

Sherman's march to Meridian, and the Fort Pillow massacre, remain to be considered. In describing the first of these events the Comte expresses a very unfavorable opinion of the course of General Sooy Smith, who, by his dilatoriness, allowed Forrest to stop him, and rescued himself with great difficulty. Sherman, however, carried out his expedition with the completeness he was noted for. It was a deliberately distinctive movement, like the subsequent march to the sea. It was intended to paralyze the rebels by depriving them of transportation, supplies and munitions of war. To rail against such an expedition as cruel is perfectly unreasonable. All war is cruel in the nature of the case, but whatever appearances may show, the war which produces the most complete destruction within the shortest space of time is the least cruel in the end. Sherman was a soldier, and did his work with thoroughly unsentimental precision. The Meridian expedition accomplished what it was intended to accomplish, and but for Sooy Smith's mishaps would have been even more successful. But it could not but deepen the hatred of the sufferers for the Union armies, and Forrest, who had seen the extent of the destruction, and who had lost his brother in one of the encounters with Smith, forgot that he was a soldier and began to talk, if he did not act, like a bushwhacker, threatening to put to the sword all garrisons of places which gave him the trouble of storming them, and familiarizing his own men with this way of thinking by announcing these terms to the commanders of several invested posts.

Perhaps the Comte de Paris is reluctant to accuse Forrest of other than indirect responsibility for the Fort Pillow massacre. But he does not shrink from pointing out that Forrest had inculcated the spirit of massacre, whether he meant it seriously or not; and he may be right in the conclusion that though Southern combatants were often guilty of very ferocious deeds (as in the case of Quantrell, for instance), it is not likely that disciplined soldiers belonging to a regular force would have so disgraced themselves had they not believed that they had warrant for what they did in the openly declared policy and purpose of their commander. The Comte indeed refuses to admit the most sensational histories of the massacre. He rejects the story of the deliberate burning of the hospital, though he accepts the mutilation of helpless wounded men as they lay in their pallets in the same building. Of course the presence of negro troops at Fort Pillow was what first instigated the massacre, but, once started, it was not confined to them, and in the excitement of the time it must have been equally impossible to say where it would stop if not forcibly interfered with, and to determine how much of the atrocity was deliberate malignity and how much spasmodic cruelty. No matter what the precise limits and character of motive, however, history must hold Forrest to accountability for the shameful deed.

The present volume ends with the recall of Seymour from Florida after the engagement at Olustee, and the prefatory statement of the American editor must prepare the public for a long interval between this and the next. This is to be regretted, for some of the most important chapters of the history have yet to be written, and it is evident from the parts of the work now completed that the Comte de Paris's account of the great conflict will remain for a long time standard, and will always be consulted for impartial and dispassionate treatment, careful and exhaustive detail, and judicious and intelligent criticism from the purely military point of view. There is indeed in his work an unconcealed dislike to the mingling of politics and warfare which shows his limitations plainly enough. In a country where democracy subsists and a war of which all the issues were political in some sense, the interaction of political and military forces was a necessity, and a comprehensive history of the struggle never can be written by one incapable of apprehending more than one side of the situation.